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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Rationale**

Unlike sex, which is related to biological differences and therefore rigidly determined by genetic structures, gender refers to the cultural and social roles within a particular society; it denotes a set of socially constructed characteristics of each sex (which, for some people, should be considered as a continuum instead of two mutually exclusive groups - male or female). Rather than being assigned with a fixed system of gender roles, people often develop their own as a response to their physical and social environments, including family interactions, the media, and education.

Our sense of gender and gender identity is subject to change rather than being set in stone. During the social construction of gender, we exercise some levels of agency in our choice of whether to embrace or resist any forms of gender representations we are exposed to (though such levels vary according to different contexts) (Pakuła et al., 2015); however, it does not necessarily entail that the language and images popping up in front of our eyes or blasting their ways into our ears have absolutely no constitutive power. On a daily basis, we are fed, or for some of us, overfed, with an abundance of televised news programs, dramas, game shows, soap operas, children's cartoons, music shows and so much more, not to mention programs broadcast on radio. Then came the new era of information overload with the booming of the Internet; traditional media, in conjunction with the new-born yet pervasive digital media, have become staple dishes globally (Gauntlett, 2008). A dish on its own may exert little constructive power, but in coordination with those of related content possibly has such potential. The 'nutrients' they offer may serve as a great source for our continuous construction of gender and gender identity.

Another influential source for gendering is classroom interaction and teaching/ learning materials. Sunderland (2015) asserts that one major site for the study of gender, language and language education is textbooks, given that they represent the textual form of gender representation, and that textbooks have the potential to be taken for granted because any gender stereotypes and bias portrayed in textbooks might not be subject to critical evaluation. In some cases,

students may happen to learn from textbooks things beyond documented pedagogical intentions; for example, Pakuła et al. (2015) summarize that a quantitative inequality of representation between men and women, boys and girls, in language textbooks, is likely to impose negative influences on learners' self-image; and even if such numerical imbalance is redressed, but girls and boys, women and men are painted in stereotypical, gender-biased manners, the level of devastation on learners' sense of self may remain unchanged.

Textbooks have long constituted a corner in the study of gender and language; its first golden age dated back to the 1970s and 1980s when content analyzes of gender representation in foreign language textbooks abounded, with prominent scholars such as Hellinger 1980; Schmitz 1975; Porecca 1988, Cincotta 1978, Hartman and Judd 1978 and Talansky 1986 (Litosseliti, L., & Sunderland, 2002). Though deemed as pioneering and awareness-raising, these early research on gender representation in foreign language textbooks largely drew on content analyzes instead of embracing systemic linguistic and visual analysis.

The very beginning of the 1970s witnessed an exponential growth in the use of images in ESL materials, by means of which common sense about the world is communicated. Reproduction of these selected images is an intrinsic part, during which textbook producers could play a major role in gender positioning, and such positioning may be further confirmed and disseminated through the use of teachers (Giaschi, 2000). That is why increasing scholarly efforts are focused on systemically deconstructing the system of meanings carried through not only verbal texts but also images in ESL materials, thereby questioning their subliminal ideologies and assumptions.

*Solutions* book series 2<sup>nd</sup> edition are the best-selling secondary course by Oxford University Press and *Solutions* books at the elementary level have been used as English textbooks for non-specialized students at Quy Nhon University. A systemic analysis on gender representation of these books, however, seems to be an uncharted territory. To narrow down this gap, the researcher will apply Systemic functional grammar by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) and Grammar of visual design by Kress, G., & van Leeuwen (2006) to delve into how gender is represented in *Solution Elementary Second Edition Student's Book* by Oxford University Press. Based on the results of previous studies on gender representation in international ESL textbooks (Esmaeili &

Arabmofrad, 2015; Giaschi, 2000; Musty, 2015; R. Sahragard, 2010; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015), this study will be conducted with the hypothesis that there is imbalance in gender representation between females and males, and that males have supremacy over females in both textual and pictorial parts.

## **1.2. Aim and Objectives of the Study**

### ***1.2.1. Aim***

This research seeks to uncover how gender is represented verbally and visually in Solution Elementary Second Edition Student's Book. The results are expected to shed some light on whether any explicit or subliminal gender stereotyping exists, which, in turn, provides possible pedagogical guidelines for teachers and parents alike.

### ***1.2.2. Objectives***

The study will be conducted with the following objectives:

- To identify and analyze the representation of gender verbally in dialogues and reading comprehension texts.
- To identify and analyze the representation of gender in the illustrations accompanying the dialogues and reading comprehension texts.
- To analyze the interaction between verbal and visual discourse for the representation of gender..

## **1.3. Research Questions**

The research is framed by the following questions:

1. How is gender represented verbally?
2. How is gender represented through images?
3. How does verbal and visual modes interact to represent gender identity?

#### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

Solution Elementary Second Edition Student's Book comprise a range of subgenres, such as reading comprehension exercises, listening comprehension exercises, gap-filling exercises, question-answer pair work, sentence completion and so on. Taking a corpus-based approach, the researcher can simply combine these subgenres and investigate gender representation through the lens of, for example, occupational roles. However, the quantitative results may shadow fundamental (and often hidden) representational issues (Mustapha, A. S., & Mills, S., 2015)

This study will therefore mainly involve qualitative analyzes and confine its scope to reading comprehension exercises and dialogues. Dialogues and their commonly accompanied activities (such as role play) seem to be an effective tool for teachers to get students speaking, during which male students normally act out male characters and female students, female characters (Litosseliti, L., & Sunderland, 2002); dialogues have therefore attracted particular attention among gender analysts (Mustapha, A. S., & Mills, S., 2015). Though sporadically featuring human characters, reading comprehension texts in Solution Elementary Second Edition Student's Book are thoroughly illustrated with vivid pictures, which may allow for further insights on how gender is displayed.

This research will be drawn on Systemic functional grammar by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) and Grammar of visual design by Kress, G., & van Leeuwen (2006). These two frameworks are corresponding to each other and therefore will allow for more logical comparison between the ways gender is represented verbally and visually. However, the analysis will cease at uncovering experiential meaning of verbal discourse and representational meaning of visual discourse, given the time constraint of a MA thesis.

## **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The study is targeted at teachers and parents and possibly textbook writers. For teachers and parents, they can draw on the results to alert their students (and children) to any remaining gender stereotyping, and simultaneously identify progressive approaches to gender identity that are displayed in textbooks. The study's results could probably provide useful information for textbook writers on potential parts that need rectification.

## **1.6. Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis will include five chapters:

In chapter one - Introduction, the researcher will declare the rationale, the aims and objectives of the study, research questions, the scope of the study, the significance and organization of the study.

Chapter two will provide an overview of previous relevant studies and the theoretical background on which the analysis will draw.

Chapter three will be devoted to the discussion of research methods and research procedures.

In chapter four, the researcher will present and elaborate on the findings of the study.

Chapter five will be allocated for the summary of the major findings, conclusion, implications, limitations, and finally suggestions for further studies.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. Systemic Functional Grammar and Transitivity System**

Systemic Functional Grammar by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) helps to describe and explain the organization of '*meaning-making resources*' used to communicate meanings and perform multiple functions in various contexts of our everyday lives. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) divide the functions of language into three types. These are the ideational meta-function (language is used to construe our experience of the outer world and our inner world), the interpersonal meta-function (language is used to enact our personal and social relationships), and lastly the textual meta-function (language is employed to organize discourse and create continuity and flow).

The ideational meta-function encompasses logical function (language describe logical relationship between two or more meaningful units) and experiential function (language expresses our experiences with external and internal worlds). The experiential function is chiefly construed by transitivity and voice.

The transitivity system allows for an analysis of the meaning of clauses by investigating choice of process types and participants. As a system of lexico-grammatical choices, transitivity provides meaning potentials for language users to choose a possibility that conveys the meaning that meets their social and personal needs as well as the view they holds about themselves and the world around.

Transitivity includes six kinds of processes: (a) Material process, (b) Mental process, (c) Relational process, (d) Behavioral process, (e)

Verbal process and (f) Existential process (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

- Material processes construe the ‘doing’ and ‘happening’, ‘a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 224). Prototypically, these relate to perceivable, concrete changes in the material world. They also cover abstract processes. The main Participants in material process are Actor and Goal. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004: 224, 225) explains that Actor is “the one that does the deed — that is, the one that brings about the change.”

- Mental processes construe participants entangled in conscious processing, including processes of perception, cognition and affection. The main participants in this process are Senser and Phenomenon. Senser must be endowed with consciousness because it is “the one that ‘senses’ — feels, thinks, wants or perceives” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 249). On the other hand, what “is felt, thought, wanted, or perceived” is named Phenomenon (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 251).

- Relational processes are processes of being, becoming, in which a participant is characterized, identified or circumstantially situated. Mental processes are further broken down into two types. In identifying relational process, the participants are Identified and Identifier; in attributing relational process the main participants are Carrier and Attribute.

- Behavioral processes construe human behaviors mentally and physically. Behavior clauses are more material-like physiological and

social subtypes. The only participant in this process is Behavior, a prototypically a conscious being (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 301).

- Verbal processes are processes of saying, such as telling, stating, informing, asking, querying, demanding, offering, threatening, suggesting, and so on. There are several participants involved, but the major ones are Sayer and Recipient.

- Existential processes function to introduce an existence into the text, as a first step in talking about it. The existence may relate to an entity or an event, which is simply labelled Existent.

## **2.2. Grammar of Visual Design**

Drawn on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, Grammar of Visual Design was developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to interpret the meaning-making resources in images, namely representational, interactive and compositional meanings. In this research, only representational meaning will be explored. While Systemic Functional Grammar presents a system of Transitivity composed of types of processes to represent Ideational content in verbal language, Grammar of Visual Design offers two main dynamics: Narrative and Conceptual processes, both of which closely related to ideational metafunction of Systemic Functional Grammar.

In narrative processes, represented participants in an image are connected by a vector, a line formed by or between elements in the image. Vectors can be constituted by bodies, limbs or tools in action when participants are represented as doing something to or for each other. Vectors can be formed by eye-lines or gestures representing a line of force in a specific direction. The participant that creates the vector is called the 'Actor' and the participant that receives it is the 'Goal'.

One type of narrative processes called 'reactional processes' occur in images when a vector is formed by an eyeline and creates a reaction rather than an action (Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, 2006). The participant doing the looking is referred to as the 'Reacter' and the object or person receiving the gaze is the 'Phenomenon'. A reaction in

an image can be either transactional, where the Reactor and Phenomena are present, or non-transactional, where only the Reactor is present.

Conceptual processes which present class, structure or meaning could be more stable and general than Narrative. Conceptual representations are related to the states of timeless essence rather than dealing with a fixed and constant spatial order. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), conceptual images can be divided into three sub-processes: Classificational, Analytical, and Symbolic.

In Classificational processes, participants are related to each other in terms of taxonomy of types of things, where *'at least one set of participants will play the role of Subordinates with respect to at least one other participant, the Superordinate'* (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:79). In Analytical processes, participants are related within a part-whole structure; the whole is called Carrier, while the parts are referred to as Possessive Attributes. Symbolic processes, on the other hand, define the meaning, symbol or identity of a participant.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHOD**

The aim of this chapter is to explain the research methodology employed in this study. A brief look at the research methods will be provided at first, followed by the presentation of the data collection and research procedures.

### **3.1. Research Approach**

The study is conducted to (1) to identify and analyze the representation of gender verbally in dialogues and reading comprehension texts; (2) to identify and analyze the representation of gender in illustrations accompanying the dialogues and reading comprehension texts; and (3) to analyze the interaction between verbal and visual discourse for the reflection of gender identity. With these objectives in mind, both qualitative and quantitative methods will be adopted.

Qualitative method will be employed for the identification, categorization and analysis of experiential processes in dialogues and reading comprehension texts based on Transitivity system and Visual grammar; specifically analytical technique is to identify and analyze verbal and visual discourse, while synthetic technique is for the synthesis of the qualitative results into a general picture. Walliman (2006) explains that quantitative approach is appropriate for collecting numerical data and for testing out a hypothesis; therefore, quantitative method will be employed to examine whether there is quantitative imbalance in gender representation between females and males; here comparative technique will be performed.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

#### ***3.2.1. Source***

*Solutions* series were first published by Oxford University Press in 2013 and have been the best-selling secondary course, offering the tried and trusted Solutions methodology alongside fresh and diverse material that will spark your students' interest and drive them to succeed. The best-selling course for teenagers provides new and

exciting content that is delivered using the successful methodology of the previous editions. *Solutions* turns all students into active learners, by offering a rich variety of learning opportunities for a whole range of abilities through extension and revision activities in all components - giving everyone a sense of achievement whatever their level.

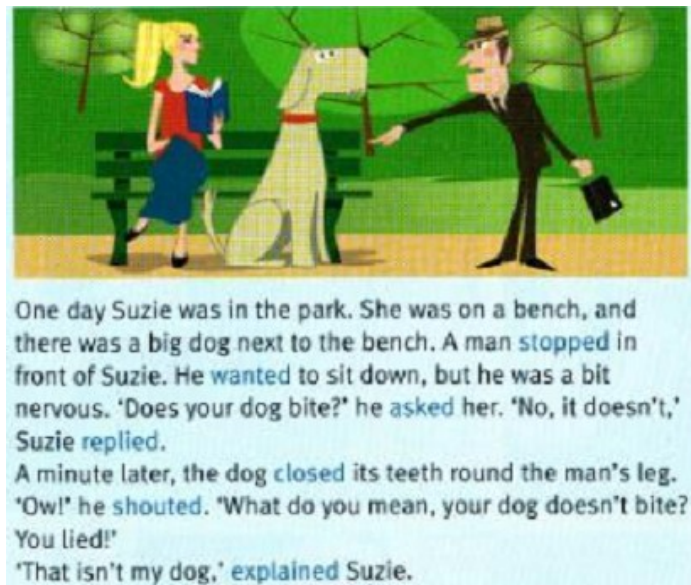
The series contain five levels (elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced), each of which includes a student's book, a workbook and a teacher's book. Elementary student's book contains ten units, all of which follow the same format: (A) Vocabulary and listening, (B) Grammar, (C) Culture, (D) Grammar, (E) Reading, (F) Everyday English, and (G) Writing.

### **3.2.2. Sample**

Data for the study will be dialogues and reading texts (from reading comprehension exercises). Dialogues and reading comprehension exercises are heavily exploited in the textbook; however, not all texts exhibit gender elements or are accompanied by images or gender-depicting images, and thus not all texts and images will be taken into account; only those featuring at least one gender both textually and pictorially will be extracted for further analysis. Here are two extracted samples.



**Figure 3.1 Everyday English (Solutions Elementary student's book, p.72)**



**Figure 3.2 Grammar (Solutions Elementary student's book, p.61)**

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The procedure for analyzing the data will be as follows.

First, the researcher will apply Systemic functional grammar by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) and Grammar of visual design by

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen (2006) to explore types of participants, processes and circumstances.

Second, the researcher will perform frequency counts for a quantitative comparison and make lists of specific processes. This will allow the researcher to pinpoint the dominant verbs/ attributes/ circumstances of each gender; the analysis will pave the way for the evaluation of whether there are any significant differences in gender representation.

Next, the researcher will take a closer look at lessons that represent both genders and sufficiently test whether any gender stereotype or imbalance occurs linguistically and visually (in which cases a comparison between the two modes will be made)

Then the researcher will probe into lessons featuring only one gender; inclusion/ exclusion of any gender is worth noting and contemplating on.

Finally, the researcher will synthesize the findings into important conclusions, though in this study no generalizations will be made.

### ***Summary***

In summary, this chapter provides an overlook at the research methods adopted in the study along with the data collection and data analysis procedures. This helps to clarify the findings and discussions reported.

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## **TIMELINE**

The proposed timeline for the research is described as follows:

<b>No.</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Time</b>
1	Research proposal	November
2	Data collection	December
3	Data analysis	January- March
4	Manuscript preparation 1	April
5	Manuscript preparation 2	May
6	Research completion	June